

SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

May 25, 1962

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MEMORANDUM FOR

THE HONORABLE McGEORGE BUNDY
The White House

I have sent a telegram to Ambassador Thompson in compliance with the President's desire to have his opinion on the two papers referred to in your note of May twenty-fourth. My own views are as follows:

In the first place, the NIE paper on which Kennan comments, dates from February of this year, when the situation in regard to the Sino-Soviet dispute was somewhat different. I am inclined to agree with George that it is somewhat too optimistic in speaking of the odds on the avoidance of an open split "during 1962" are not better than even. Since that time, as you know, there have been certain indications in Sino-Soviet relations pointing towards a desire to agree to disagree and avoid the consequences of a further exacerbation of these differences and the dangers of a split, with all that that would entail. However, there is not the slightest sign that any adjustment of the basic elements of that dispute have been or are in process of adjustment. I, therefore, tend in general to agree with George's questioning of the validity of so absolute a statement as contained in the NIE in question.

With regard to George's own views, however, I have serious reservations on some.

1. I doubt very much if George's description of Khrushchev's "frustrations" in his endeavors with the United States is really valid. It is, of course, true that there has been no diplomatic breakthrough, but I am convinced that Khrushchev is sufficiently realistic to understand fully that the field of maneuver in Berlin, for example, or in disarmament (given the

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Soviet position on verification and inspection) are pretty slim. I am also not sure that what George refers to as the cumulative effect of the U-2 incident and the Cuban fiasco, etc., are as vital to Soviet thinking as he depicts.

2. I believe that Khrushchev has advanced as a basic policy matter the thesis of peaceful co-existence not because he anticipated big and successful results from the Soviet point of view, but rather because it seemed to be the only policy, given the nuclear situation, which was really possible for the Soviet Union to follow. He undoubtedly has hopes that over the long run there will be certain areas in which some Soviet success may be achieved, but I seriously doubt if this is a sort of test policy put up by him to be judged solely on the degree of success or failure it achieves.
3. There is one very important point in this part of George's discussion which seems to be left out, and that is the threat to existing Soviet positions in the present world situation. Surely Khrushchev cannot seriously believe that the United States plans military action against them, although this, of course, remains a standard ingredient of Soviet policy.
4. In the part of his despatch which deals with Soviet-Chinese relations, I think he tends to regard the problems which have brought on the current dispute as more soluble, in essence, than I would. It seems to me the essence stated very simply, and indeed oversimplified, of this dispute is the Russian desire to continue to have Soviet policy the guideline for all communist policy, and it is this factor that the Chinese have been unwilling to accept. The Soviet Union has gone through the worst of its industrialization period and

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emerged cut into a certain place to where the risks of militant action in the international field far outweigh the gains which might be achieved from it.

5. I also do not believe that the great leap forward of the Chinese was the real source of Soviet-Chinese dissension, but merely exacerbated it. Therefore, an abandonment by the Chinese, as they appear to be doing, of the principles of the great leap forward will not in itself mitigate the areas of dissension.
[REDACTED]
6. I am inclined to believe that the present hesitancy and even uncertainty noticeable in Soviet policy is due as much to internal factors as to foreign considerations. I am inclined to agree that the sharpness of the dispute will certainly be dampened down by both sides, but without any serious or fundamental resolution of the problems that exist.
7. In regard to this whole matter, there should be one word of caution added; namely, that there is very little that the United States can do profitably to its interests in regard to this dispute. It is, of course, true that some agreement with the Soviet Union in any important area, [REDACTED] would be useful, but in view of the insufficiency of our knowledge of the real factors in operation between these countries, we certainly should not predicate any policy on the fact of the Chinese-Soviet dispute. There is little question but that we are observing a deep process of evolution inside the Soviet camp, the outcome of which cannot possibly be accurately determined at this time, but at the present moment, I see very little basis for any shift in our current policy because of these developments.

CEB

Charles E. Bohlen

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